

CHAPTER 2. WILLIAMSON ACT STATUS AND TRENDS

INTRODUCTION

This *Williamson Act Status and Trends Report* was prepared as part of Placer County's comprehensive Western Placer Agricultural Lands Assessment and Conservation Program, in conjunction with Placer Legacy. This chapter identifies Williamson Act contract enrollment patterns and trends for farmland and ranchland within the western portion of the County.

To identify trends in Williamson Act activity since the program's implementation in 1967, more than three (3) decades of data were collected for digital mapping. The graphic figures contained in this report (*Figures 2-1 through 2-5*) show both changes in contract status over time and the current uses of Williamson Act land, based on the most recent land use information from the State Department of Water Resources (DWR). The accompanying narrative report provides an analysis of the data and compares enrollment trends in Placer County to those statewide.

CALIFORNIA LAND CONSERVATION ACT OF 1965

The California Land Conservation Act (CLCA) of 1965, Sections 51200 et seq. of the California Government Code, commonly referred to as the "Williamson Act", enables local governments to restrict the use of specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. Landowners enter into contracts with participating cities and counties and agree to restrict their land to agriculture or open space use for a minimum of 10 years. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market (speculative) value. Local governments receive an annual subvention of forgone property tax revenues from the State via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971.

The Department of Conservation reports that the Land Conservation Act Program has remained stable and effective as a mechanism for protecting agricultural and open space land from premature conversion of land to urban uses. DOC indicates that the program might have remained small if not for the addition of Article 28 (now part of Article 13) to the State Constitution. Article 13 declares the interest of the state in preserving open space land and provides a constitutional basis for valuing property according to its actual use. The amendment originated with groups interested in the preservation of open space land. Agricultural interests added their support after recognizing the importance of a constitutional backing for preferential tax assessments. Article 13 allows preferential assessments for recreational, scenic, and natural resource areas as well as areas devoted to production of food and fiber.¹

¹ State of California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, 1998.

Participation in the Williamson Act program has been steady, hovering at nearly 16 million acres enrolled in contract statewide since the early 1980s. This number represents about one-third of all privately held land in California, and about one-half of all the State's agricultural land. Indications from the State Department of Conservation point to an indefinite continuation of this level of statewide participation into the future.

LEGISLATION AFFECTING THE WILLIAMSON ACT

Farmland Security Zones

In August 1998, the Williamson Act's farmland security zone (FSZ) provisions were enacted with the passage of Senate Bill 1182 (Costa, Chapter 353, Statutes of 1998). This sub-program, dubbed the "Super Williamson Act," enables agricultural landowners to enter into contracts with the County for 20-year increments with an additional 35 percent tax benefit over and above the standard Williamson Act contract. To date, no applications have been made for FSZs in Placer County, however one such application is currently under consideration.

Senate Bill 1835

Senate Bill 1835 (Johnston, Chapter 690, Statutes of 1998) requires the local agency formation commission (LAFCO), pursuant to any proposal by a city that would result in the annexation of Williamson Act contracted land, to determine whether the city is required to succeed to the rights, duties and powers of the county under the contract or whether the city may exercise an option to not succeed to the rights, duties and powers of the county.

Cortese-Knox Local Government Reorganization Act

Senate Bill 2227 (Monteith, Chapter 590, Statutes of 1998) added new requirements to the Cortese-Knox Local Governmental Reorganization Act regarding proposed annexation of Williamson contract land. If the proposal would result in the annexation to a city of land that is subject to the Williamson Act, then the petition shall state whether the city shall succeed to the contract or whether the city intends to exercise its option to not succeed to the contract.

Placer County Agricultural and Open Space Preserves Program

The Placer County Agricultural and Open Space Preserve Program was established in accordance with the Williamson Act to protect agricultural lands for the continued production of agricultural commodities, and to protect certain other lands devoted to open space uses. The *Administrative Rules for Agricultural and Open Space Preserves*, administered by the County's Planning Director, Agricultural Commissioner and Assessor, implement the provisions of the Williamson Act in Placer County. These rules are not intended to replace the Williamson Act, rather work in conjunction with applicable provisions of the Williamson Act. Although the

provision for FSZs is not yet reflected in the rules, it will be upon the County's receipt of its first application.

WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility requirements for a Williamson Act contract include 1) parcels with a total area of 100 acres; 2) parcels adjacent to others subject to land conservation contracts, so that the total area of contiguous parcels subject to the contract is 100 acres or more; or 3) parcels located in an area with unique agricultural enterprises, where the establishment of an agricultural preserve with a total area of less than 100 acres is in the public interest and consistent with the General Plan. Individual parcels proposed for contract shall comply with the minimum lot area requirements as follows:

The County's rules require that sites be developed with an existing commercial agricultural operation engaged in the active production of an agricultural commodity. Qualifying agricultural operations may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Agricultural operations on prime soils.* Qualifying agricultural operations may include all types of irrigated field crop production, dry farming, orchards and vineyards.
- *Agricultural operations on non-prime soils.* Qualifying agricultural operations may include any of the activities described in (1) above, or the raising of cattle, fowl or poultry, goats, sheep, swine, horses, llamas or other animals.
- *Sites planted but without commercial production.* Property without existing agricultural production may be considered for preserve and contract only where the applicant demonstrates that site has been planted with trees or vines for orchard or vineyard operations, and that suitable irrigation facilities have been installed.

The applicant's agricultural operations shall have produced a minimum gross income of \$4,500 during the year prior to filing for the contract, or \$4,500 average gross income over the previous three years, except where a site is occupied by a planted, but as yet non-producing orchard or vineyard.

Agricultural Land Conservation Contract Provisions

The term of the contract shall be 10 years, in accordance with the provisions of the Williamson Act and may be renewed at the end of the term. The contract shall specify, with few exceptions, that the applicant landowner and/or any successors in interest shall not file with the County any application for the development of the site with any use other than those allowed by the contract (as described above), until no more than one year remains until the termination of the contract through the non-renewal process.

Limitations on land uses include allowing only uses on the contracted land that are compatible with continuing agricultural operations; land uses that are allowable under the permit requirements and development standards of the Placer County Zoning Ordinance; and

compatible uses that are clearly incidental or accessory to the primary use of the site for the production of agricultural commodities. Residential uses are allowed on contracted land for the purpose of supporting onsite agricultural operations, and *not* to provide non-agricultural-related rural home sites.

Open Space Preserve Contracts

An additional section of the County's Administrative Rules provides opportunity for protection of certain non-agricultural open space lands that the General plan classifies as desirable open space or environmentally sensitive, and other lands with environmental characteristics determined by the Board of Supervisors to be of high value to the current and future residents of Placer County. The term of a land conservation contract for open space preserve is 20 years minimum rather than 10 years.

CONTRACT STATUS TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The following contract status terms and definitions are used throughout this report. Definitions are provided by the State of California's Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection. Abbreviations for these terms are also provided, where applicable, as used in the report's tables and graphics.

Active Contract

The minimum term for a Williamson Act contract is 10 years. Since the term automatically renews on each anniversary date of the contract, the actual term can be indefinite. Active contracts, as shown on *Figures 2-1 through 2-4* in this report, are those that have not been subject to filing for notice of non-renewal (NNR), cancellation, public acquisition or annexation.

Notice of Non-Renewal (NNR)

Contracts may be terminated at the option of the landowner or local government by initiating the process of term non-renewal. Under this process, the remaining contract term (nine years in the case of an original term of 10 years) is allowed to lapse, with the contract null and void at the end of the term. Property tax rates gradually increase during the nonrenewal period, until they reach normal (i.e., non-restricted) levels upon termination of the contract.

Cancellation

Under a set of specifically defined circumstances, a contract may be cancelled without completing the process of term nonrenewal. Contract cancellation, however, involves a comprehensive review and approval process, and the payment of fees by the landowner equal to 12 percent of the full market value of the subject property. No cancellations are included in the Placer County data, as shown on *Figures 2-1 through 2-4* of this report.

Expired

Expired parcels are those parcels that have previously been subject to Williamson Act contract, and have since been removed from the contract through non-renewal, cancellation or annexation.

PLACER COUNTY CONTRACT STATUS TRENDS

During Spring 2000, Placer County compiled a GIS database of Williamson Act contract information that identifies each contracted parcel, parcel size, zoning, date of enrollment, and contract status. North Fork Associates converted the data into digital maps to graphically portray contract status trends for 1967-2000 as shown in *Figures 2-1 through 2-4* of this report.

Tables 2-1 and 2-2 below correspond to *Figures 2-1 through 2-4* indicating, by decade, the collective acreage and the number of parcels for each stage of contract, respectively. Since the size of particular parcels is routinely affected by resurveys, minor boundary adjustments, parcel size recalculations, and other planning and assessment activities, acreages enumerated below are to be considered estimates. These figures are intended to show historical trends in enrollment but do not presume to precisely enumerate the various acreages or contracts in any specific year—a detailed analysis of the contract data (outside the scope of this project), would be required to determine exact acreages at a given point in time.

Enrollment and Non-renewal Trends

As shown in *Table 2-2*, County data indicate that the vast majority of acreage was placed under contract during the first 13 years of the program (1967-1980); acreage figures peaked around 1980 with a significant decline by the end of the following decade (-17%) and a second, less significant decline (-4%), in the most recent decade.

TABLE 2-1

Placer County Minimum Lot Area for Williamson Act Contracts

Land Type or Agricultural Operation	Minimum Lot Area to Qualify for Preserve and Contract
Prime agricultural lands	10 acres
Non-prime agricultural lands, intensively farmed (berries, orchards, vineyards, vegetables, etc.)	20 acres
Non-prime agricultural lands	40 acres

TABLE 2-2**Placer County Williamson Act Contract Status Trends
(In Acreage)²**

	1967-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2000
Active	18,695	53,230	44,058	42,244
New	18,695	39,808	11,342	3,777
Existing	0	13,422	32,718	38,467
Non-Renewal	0	5,273	19,251	3,308
Expired (out)	0	0	6,536	32,262

TABLE 2-3**Placer County Williamson Act Contract Status Trends
(Number of Assessor Parcels)³**

	1967-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2000
Active	244	599	491	470
New	244	398	109	49
Existing	0	201	382	421
Non-Renewal	0	118	205	40
Expired (out)	0	0	138	410

Non-renewal patterns, as shown in *Figures 2-1 through 2-4*, appear to substantiate a trend in declining enrollment; non-renewal acreage increased 265% during the period 1980-1990 with only a slight increase in non-renewals between 1991 and 2000 (*Note: a 9-year non-renewal process accounts for the lag time between NNR filing and expired status*). While the majority of expired

² Placer County Planning Department, 2001.

³ *Ibid.*

contracts were typically enacted through non-renewal notices, a small amount of contracts were terminated through cancellation or annexation.

Records show that no land was removed from Williamson Act until after 1980. Over the next 10 years, 6,536 acres or 12 percent of the previous decade's acreage was removed through expired contracts; along with non-renewal land, an additional portion was evidently removed through cancellation, annexation or public acquisition. The period 1991-2000 saw the most significant increase in expired contracts. The result was removal of 32,262 acres of land, or 73 percent of the previous decade's land, from the program; it appears that a larger percentage of this land was removed through means other than non-renewal, as compared with the previous decade. This significant drop was largely offset by the amount of new enrollments into the program during the 10-year period, as evidenced by a mere four (4) percent decrease in enrolled acres overall.

FIGURE 2-1
1967-1970

FIGURE 2-2
1971-1980

FIGURE 2-3
1981-1990

FIGURE 2-4
1991-2000

Subdivision of Williamson Act Land

A trend toward subdividing Williamson Act lands has emerged as a result of recent County approvals. The effectiveness of Williamson Act as a tool for agricultural land preservation becomes an issue of concern as Williamson Act contracts are subdivided into smaller and smaller units of land. In general terms, the net result is that the viability of the property to produce food and fiber is reduced as the unit of land becomes smaller, particularly if it is assumed that the land must be of sufficient size to require a person to labor full-time on the property⁴.

The other major concern is that further subdivision of Williamson Act land, and the resultant construction additional homes, has the potential effect of shifting the character of the area from agricultural to higher-density rural residential. The reason for this is that the County's rules permit one (1) home on every contracted parcel if there is a full-time laborer on the property. Although the creation of additional parcels does not result in the need for additional laborers (or housing), it is expected that homes will be built on the subdivided parcels. A recent example is the County's approval of a 1995 request to subdivide 122 acres into 3 parcels, which resulted in the potential for two additional homes on the same 122 acres. A continuation of this trend could find the County providing a tax subsidy for rural residential land with a marginal return in agricultural production⁵.

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Contract Status in Relation to Planned Growth

An overlay of Placer County cities' spheres of influence and County plan areas on *Figure 2-4* indicates that notices of non-renewal and expirations are concentrated in and around city spheres of influence and major transportation corridors (existing and proposed). Contract non-renewals and expirations in proximity to the cities of Lincoln and Roseville, the new town areas⁶, as well as the proposed Placer Parkway and Highway 65 bypass corridor alternatives⁷,

⁴ Staff report prepared by Placer County Planning Department, 9/5/95

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ As proposed during Placer County's 1994 General Plan update.

⁷ *Ibid.*

would suggest that land speculation has provided some impetus to discontinue Williamson Act contract commitments (*Note: the location of Williamson Act contracts in relation to these two proposed transportation corridors is analyzed further in Chapter 4 and shown in Figure 4-6 which delineates areas of growth pressures in the western County*).

Cities may exercise their right to cancel a contract upon annexation of the affected land into the city. However, in spite the amount of land annexed into Loomis, Lincoln, Roseville and Rocklin over the past several decades, the Assessors' Office records show that there have been no cancellations in Placer County (i.e., cities are not typically exercising those rights). Contracts are being cancelled at the request of the property owners. If the trend continues, the County may see Williamson Act contracts subdivided into contracts that may meet the County's minimum standards (as described earlier in this report).⁸

Active Farming of Williamson Act Lands

In 1994, approximately 5,300 acres of Williamson Act land was not actively farmed as reported by the landowner. This represents approximately 6 percent of the total acreage of land in the Williamson Act program at that time.⁹ Such lands that are enrolled in the program and receiving a property tax subsidy, but not providing food and fiber as intended by the Williamson Act, suggest that the County's policy on enforcement may need to be reevaluated. Policy issues include whether staff should 1) provide a follow-up evaluation of contracted lands in order to determine productivity; 2) unilaterally file Notices of Non-Renewal on land out of production or other enforcement actions; 3) require annual income statements from each contract;¹⁰ or 4) acknowledge that these lands protect open space regardless of the lack of production.

Small Operations

Most of the small, intensively farmed properties in the County are not enrolled in the Williamson Act for a variety of reasons. First, many of these properties are smaller than the minimum allowable parcel sizes (10 acres for prime land and 20 acres for intensively farmed non-prime land). Second, the tax incentives (in total dollars) for small properties may not be sufficient to encourage landowners to encumber them for 10 years. Finally, the effect of Proposition 13 is similar for small properties (*Note: see discussion of the effects of Proposition 13 on Williamson Act contracts below*).

⁸ Personal communication with Chris Bullis, Placer County Assessor's Office 5/18/01

⁹ Staff report prepared by Placer County Planning Department, 9/5/95

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONTRACT REMOVAL

No single factor can be considered most influential in the pattern of Williamson Act contract removal. The cumulative effect of multiple factors has, however, contributed to removal of lands from Williamson Act contracts. Some of the factors include:

- Suburbanization pattern of growth throughout California;
- Federal policy and funding has facilitated the development of highway infrastructure and municipal wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) to outlying areas—Placer Parkway, Hwy 65 Bypass, Roseville and Lincoln WWTPs;
- Excess capacity provided by these systems has fostered suburban growth;
- Water availability;
- Age of farmers;
- Regulatory uncertainty;
- Economics of production; and
- Land speculation (due to some of the above).

Effects of Proposition 13

In 1978, the passage of Proposition 13 changed tax assessment practices, limiting valuations to a static base year. Many assumed that this new assessment scheme would severely limit the value of the tax relief offered by Williamson Act, and that acreage enrolled in the program would plummet. The Department of Conservation reports, however, that Proposition 13 has had a negligible effect on Land Conservation Act participation. A study regarding the effects of Proposition 13 on the overall tax benefits of the Land Conservation Act found that the average tax savings realized as a result of participation in the program had dropped by only about 20 percent. The average tax savings still amounted to as much as 83 percent, depending upon how recently the property in question had changed ownership.¹¹

Williamson Contract Land Use

An overlay of the mapped Williamson Act contract parcels with California Department of Water Resources' land use map is shown as *Figure 2-5*. Predominant agricultural land uses within the study area include rice, deciduous orchards, grain and hay crops, and pasture. An overlay of current Williamson Act contracts status shows where the bulk of existing, non-renewal and expired contracts are relative to current land uses.

¹¹ State Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, 1998.

Much of the enrolled acreage is concentrated at the westernmost end of the County in rice lands. Additional acreage in this area, although less extensive, contains deciduous orchard, grain and hay crops, and idle farmland. Active contract land throughout the remainder of the study area consists primarily of pasture and other “native” vegetation used for livestock grazing.

Non-renewal lands are limited, and consist primarily of pasture or other native vegetation. Expired contract lands are spread throughout the study area with the vast majority comprised of pasture/non-native vegetation and rice. The available data do not indicate whether idle Williamson Act land is vacant or occupied as rural estates.

High Value Commodities

The value of agricultural commodities being produced affects the level of tax benefit derived from enrollment in the Williamson Act program. As the value of the commodity increases, the tax benefit decreases since the benefit calculation is based on the production value in agriculture relative to its market value as developable acreage. Rice land, for example, yields a substantially higher dollar per acre than does cow/calf production. Consequently, the Williamson Act tax benefit derived from rice production would be less than that of a cow/calf operation.

With the recent advent of urban growth pressures and other factors influencing Williamson Act enrollment numbers, the discrepancy in tax benefits between the various commodities may not be as relevant as it was 20 years ago. There are numerous other considerations that are affecting landowners’ decisions regarding their enrollment in the program that have significantly greater financial consequences as discussed below and detailed in Chapters 1, 3 and 4 of this report.

Reversal in Enrollment Trends

Future trends in Williamson Act enrollment will largely depend on the commitment of property owners to the 42,000 acres of agricultural land that currently remain active in the program. These agricultural parcels are faced with the same pressures toward land conversion as the nearly 40,000 acres that have been removed from Williamson Act contracts since the program’s inception.

Urban-rural land use conflicts continue to increase as the cities of western Placer County—particularly Roseville and Lincoln—have annexed large amounts of land targeted for urban development. The approval of large development projects such as Bickford Ranch and the West Roseville Specific Plan area, along with construction of Placer Parkway and/or the Highway 65 Bypass could continue trends in land speculation and a reversal in enrollment in the Williamson Act. Growth pressures are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 of this report.

The aging of Placer County farmers is another significant factor that may lead to a decline in enrollment or contract renewals. As discussed in Chapter 1, the aging farm population has serious implications for the future of agriculture in Placer County. A recent survey showed that family members of aging farmers do not intend to continue with the farming operations.

Consequently, much of the agricultural land that is being actively farmed at this time is likely to be sold during the next 20 years.

Other factors may also affect enrollment trends in the future. They include, but are not limited to, uncertainty over water availability and the ability to compete in the local and global markets.

Placer County's active pursuit of agricultural easements as part of Placer Legacy and the Habitat Conservation Program (HCP) may provide some incentive for farmers to remain committed to agricultural production under the Williamson Act. In addition, as landowners' familiarity with the Farmland Security Zones (FSZs) increases, new enrollments in this "Super Williamson Act" program could help to offset any acreage removed from the program in the future. The extent to which either of these support programs offered by the County will affect the overall enrollment trend in Williamson Act remains an unknown, however.

COMPARISON WITH STATEWIDE TRENDS

The State Department of Conservation reports that the volume of activities that affect Williamson Act land throughout the State is relatively high at any given point in time. These activities, however, generally do not result in large annual fluctuations in the total number of enrolled acres on a statewide basis.

At the inception of the Williamson Act program in 1967/68, enrollment steadily rose until 1979/80 at which time enrollment leveled off at approximately 16.5 million acres. Beginning in 1981/82, enrollments declined slightly to approximately 15.5 million acres and maintained that level through 1987/88. Another slight increase during the following year, and enrolled acreage has remained relatively stable since 1989 at approximately 15.9 million acres.

State Government Code Section 51207 mandates that a Williamson Act Status Report be prepared. The purpose of the report, which is published by the State Department of Conservation (DOC), is to provide information to the Legislature and the general public on the implementation of the Act by counties and cities. Using Placer County's 2000 GIS database and UC Cooperative Extension's 2000 *Placer County Agricultural Study*, this status report allows some qualitative comparisons between Placer County and statewide trends in Williamson Act contract activity. The following observations are made based on DOC's most recent status report containing lien year 1997-98 information¹²:

- As of 12/31/98 over one half of California's total farmland and ranchland (15.9 million acres), and nearly one-third of all privately held land in the State were enrolled under Williamson Act contracts. This compares with Placer County's enrollment of 38 percent of total farmland and ranchland, and 9 percent of privately held land.

¹² Department of Conservation's California Land Conservation Act Status Report 1997 to 1998, dated 7/31/00.

- As of 12/31/98, one third of the Williamson Act contracted acreage in California was prime agricultural land; the remainder was open space or non-prime land. This compares similarly with Placer County's 36 percent of contracted acreage that was prime agricultural land during the same period.
- In 1997 a greater number of acres (103,580) were added to the program statewide than removed (90,676 acres). That trend continued in 1998, during which time 197,845 acres came into the program while 146,618 acres were removed. This can be contrasted to Placer County's trend during the same years—in 1997, 158 acres were added to the local program and 4,515 acres were removed; the trend continued in 1998 during which time the acreage coming into Williamson Act was 101 acres and the amount removed was 8,115 acres.
- Most of the statewide acreage withdrawn from the program in 1997 and 1998 was through non-renewal expirations—approximately 72 percent and 80 percent, respectively. This compares with Placer County's 99 percent through non-renewal in both 1997 and 1998.
- In 1998, public acquisitions of Williamson Act lands increased by 4,269 acres from the previous year. Most of this land, acquired by public agencies, occurred within Fresno, San Diego and Tehama counties.
- The counties that enrolled significant amounts of new acreage in 1998 were Colusa, Kings and Stanislaus counties. None of these counties are adjacent to or in close proximity to Placer County.
- The statewide status report shows that in 1997, approximately 2.8 percent (441,376 acres) of the total acreage in contract was at some stage in the nine-year contract non-renewal process. This compares with 30 percent (9,366 prime acres/9,047 non-prime acres) of Placer County's acreage in contract. Similarly, in 1998 about 2.1 percent of the total land in contract statewide was in the non-renewal process, as compared with Placer County's 19 percent (3,694 prime acres/6,461 non-prime acres).
- By end of year 2000, approximately 400,000 acres were under Farmland Security Zone (FSZ) contracts (Super Williamson Act), with 16 counties offering this as an option. At the present time, Placer County has no lands designated as FSZs. Upon receipt of the first FSZ application, the County will amend its Administrative Rules to add this Williamson Act subprogram.

In summary, this 1997-98 comparison shows that Placer County's percentage of farmland under Williamson Act contracts, particularly privately held land, is significantly lower than the statewide average. DOC figures showed, also, that a slightly greater amount of acreage was added to the program than was removed statewide, while Placer County showed only a relatively small amount of land was added to the program with a significant amount of acreage removed.

FIGURE 2-5
Land Use Map

CONCLUSION

Williamson Act lands comprise a significant portion of Placer County's farmland and ranch land. With the exception of pasture/non-native grasslands, most of the producing cropland in western Placer County has been, or is currently, under Williamson Act contracts. A study on enrollment trends shows that, while there has been a significant amount of land removed from the program in the last 20 years, new enrollments continue to offset expired contracts, keeping Williamson Act contracts an active and viable means of preserving agricultural land.

Williamson Act contracts cannot be relied upon as the predominant means of preserving agricultural land "in perpetuity" as with other types of binding agreements (e.g., agricultural easements). However, in areas that are moving steadily toward urbanization, Williamson Act contracts serve as a planning tool by slowing the conversion of agricultural land and forcing discussion of land use compatibility issues with developments proposed in proximity to farm operations. The effectiveness of Williamson Act could be further strengthened through a review and update of the County's program and administrative rules.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations may encourage landowners to maintain existing Williamson Act contracts or to enroll new lands into the program.

The Placer County Planning Department should work with the Agricultural Commissioner and the Agricultural Commission to prepare a series of recommendations for updating/revising the County's Williamson Act Program. Possible actions may include:

1. Reevaluating the minimum standard of \$4,500 in *gross* proceeds to determine whether that amount remains a reasonable amount to qualify for a contract. Although *net* proceeds could be used as an alternative measure, the fluctuation in production costs and market prices from year-to-year will influence the net income and this measure may not accurately reflect the level of productivity;
2. Reassessing the County's policy of permitting one house per parcel on land in Williamson Act contracts, allowing additional homes on these lands to 1) encourage children to continue the farming operations; and 2) facilitate agro-tourism;
3. Discouraging further subdivision of Williamson Act lands; and
4. Providing information to landowners regarding the Farmland Security Zone program to dispel landowners' uncertainty about the program.